

PHIL 20C / HOLDEN / SPRING 2007

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY: EMPIRICISTS TO KANT

SECOND PAPER ASSIGNMENT **(40% of grade)**

DUE DATE: In class, Friday June 1st
(Late papers will be severely penalized.)

5-6 pages maximum length, double spaced, reasonable font size

COMPOSITION:

Each question asks you to *reconstruct one of the arguments from Hume's texts*. Your reconstruction should clearly identify and distinguish the argument's various assumptions, it should clearly explain the inferences made in that argument, and (of course) it should also clearly set out the intended conclusion of that argument.

Each question also asks you to present a '*reasoned evaluation*.' A 'reasoned evaluation' will involve raising one or two of the best objections you can to the argument. (These objections might challenge one of the more questionable premises in the argument, or they might challenge one of the inferences. The objections might be original to you, drawn from your reading of the secondary literature [with appropriate credit given], or they might come from class discussion etc...) Acting in defense of the argument, you should then offer the best response(s) you can to these objection(s). Finally you should adjudicate. Is the objection ultimately successful and the best response available a failure? Is the argument sunk? Or can the argument be successfully defended against the best available objection? Is the argument sound?

Grading is based on accuracy, completeness, and philosophical acuity of the essay considered as a response to the question posed. Clear, precise writing is also essential.

SUPPORT FROM THE INSTRUCTOR AND TAs:

The instructor and the TAs are very happy to meet with you to discuss your papers as you are thinking about them and putting them together (preferably during our official office hours if you can make it then). We can talk about your overall strategy for the paper and the various arguments, objections, responses etc... you are considering. We can talk about the various philosophical issues that come up, work through your arguments and so on.

However, neither the instructor nor the TAs will be reading drafts, since we don't want to get into close editing and micro-management of your papers. Getting these various fine-grain details right is *your* job: the assignment is partly about your showing that *you* can clearly and precisely reconstruct arguments, raise objections, and generally write at the appropriate level of sophistication.

SOURCES, ORIGINALITY & PLAGIARISM:

The paper must be the student's own work. Students are certainly encouraged to talk to classmates about these issues, but must take care not to incorporate others' ideas without explicit acknowledgement. Students may also consult the secondary literature in order to confirm their own understanding of the material or to stimulate their own thoughts (note that the syllabus

includes a list of the most useful secondary literature); however the use of such secondary literature is not expected or required.

Any material taken directly from another person must be placed in quotation marks, with the source explicitly cited. Whenever others' ideas are used or discussed without taking material directly from their writings, the source of those ideas must be explicitly cited as well. *Departures from this policy may amount to plagiarism.*

(For the policy on plagiarism, see the syllabus.)

THE ASSIGNMENT: YOUR PAPER SHOULD BE A RESPONSE TO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TWO QUESTIONS

(It is important to answer every part of the question; each successive part should be thought of as leading the essay writer step-by-step through the writing of a satisfactory short essay.)

1. Summarizing the results of his attack on the traditional understanding of causal power, Hume writes that "One event follows another; but we can never observe any tie between them. They seem *conjoined*, but never *connected*. ... [T]he necessary conclusion *seems* to be, that we have no idea of connection or power at all, and that these words are absolutely without any meaning, when employed either in philosophical reasonings, or in common life." (*Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, section 7 paragraph 26, p.357)

(i) Clearly and precisely reconstruct Hume's argument (in ECHU section 7) for the thesis that we never observe any causal power in any of our experiences. How exactly does he argue for this conclusion?

(ii) In just a sentence or two, briefly outline what you take to be the most plausible reason for Hume's hesitant qualification in the above quotation ("the necessary conclusion *seems* to be"—Hume's emphasis on "seems")? Why do you think he says "*seems* to be" rather than just "is"?

(iii) Present a reasoned evaluation of Hume's thesis that we never observe any causal power in any of our experiences.

2. In Hume's *Dialogues*, the character Cleanthes argues as follows: "The curious adapting of means to ends, throughout all nature, resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the productions of human contrivance; of human design, thought, wisdom, and intelligence. Since therefore the effects resemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble; and that the Author of nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man; though possessed of much larger faculties, proportioned to the grandeur of the work, which he has executed. By this argument *a posteriori*, and by this argument alone, do we prove at once the existence of a Deity, and his similarity to human mind and intelligence." (*Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, part 2, p.402)

(i) Clearly and precisely reconstruct Cleanthes's 'argument from design' developed in part 2 and part 3 of the *Dialogues*. What exactly is the argument supposed to prove and how is it supposed to work?

(ii) What do you think are the *one* or *two* most plausible-sounding objections to this argument introduced by Hume's characters in the *Dialogues*? How exactly is (are) this (these) objection(s) supposed to sink the argument?

(iii) Use these objections to develop a reasoned evaluation of Cleanthes's argument. Is the argument from design sunk, or can it be successfully defended in the face of this objection (these objections)?